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AUTHOR Kangli, Ji
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ABSTRACT

The role of cohesion and script in note-taking for consecutive interpretation is discussed. Because note-taking is closely associated with comprehension and memory, the discussion looks first at the function of previously stored knowledge, both linguistically and culturally, which is known as script, and grammatical and lexical cohesion in understanding a discourse. Then the relationship between comprehension and memory is explored, and it is proposed that discourse analysis accomplished by grouping sentences semantically and logically can contribute to memory. Finally, a note-taking technique using key words, abbreviations, symbols, and layout of notes to call up memory is described. Examples of discourse, analysis, and related note-taking are offered. (MSE)

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COHESION, SCRIPT & NOTE-TAKING IN CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETATION

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Ji Kangli

Qinghua University, Beijing

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ABSTRACT

This paper is intended to explore the role of cohesion and script played in note-taking for consecutive interpretation. Since note-taking is closely associated with comprehension and memory, the author starts to look into the function of previously stored knowledge both linguistically and culturally which is known as script as well as grammatical and lexical cohesion in understanding a discourse. Then she goes on to investigate the relationship between comprehension and memory and finds out that discourse analysis by grouping sentences semantically and logically together can contribute to memory. And finally the author examines how note-taking can be a supplement to memory by presenting a key-word method for jotting down notes. Words, abbreviations and symbols are applied in note-taking. And the layout of one's notes is equally important for calling up what has been heard.

Key Words: cohesion, script, note-taking, consecutive interpretation

We often hear students complain in interpretation course that they can not remember what has just been heard even if they understand it. This is because they are in a dilemma of how to carry out multi-tasks, ie. to listen and memorize efficiently at the same time. This paper is attempted to explore the role of cohesion and script theory played in listening comprehension, the relationship between comprehension and memory, and finally to find out how note-taking can serve as a supplement to memory.

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1. The Role of Script and Cohesion in Comprehension

The whole process of interpretation can be looked at from a

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information processing perspective. Language stimulus input is received by the subject's perceptual receptors, then it will be selected and retained in his cognitive system and can be retrieved when necessary. In other words the procedures are perception, comprehension, memory and rendition. Since this paper mainly deals with the source language processing, I shall concentrate on the first three procedures only.

When subject is exposed to an English discourse, it is the sound that operates on his sensory organism. What he needs to do is to recognize the sounds, build them into word images and finally set up relations among the words and sentences in order to understand the message. This understanding process has much to do with script theory as well as cohesion.

Script (Schank & Abelson, 1977) is known as "a package of knowledge stored in one's long-term memory". Once the subject receives sound signals, he has to transfer it into concrete words or sentences. And then what needs to be done is to make a match between the stored relevant information in the long-term memory with the newly received one. In understanding the original discourse, the subject needs to match the new information with his linguistic and cultural script or frame acquired through previous learning. The subject's given knowledge is activated through different levels, ie. phonologically, lexically as well as syntactically. Once they are excited through newly input stimulus, comprehension occurs.

Cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) plays a similar important role in comprehension. It refers to "semantic relations that make a text a meaningful whole". Coherence of a text is realized through grammatical and lexical cohesion. The former includes reference, substitute, ellipsis and conjunction while the latter covers reiteration, synonyms, near-synonyms, superordinate, general word as well as a set words that tend to be applied in one context.

Reference, whether it is anophora or cataphora, can connect two sentences or more semantically together by pointing back or forward to the noun, phrase or even sentences. Substitution and ellipsis achieve coherence in a text by replacement or omission of the preceding constituents. With conjunction put in front of a sentence, it is likely for one to predict what will come next. For instance:

> Early European settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony and in Virginia were drawn largely from the rural areas of England. Few actual paupers and few of the really rich were among them. Nevertheless, the colonies were not peopled exclusively by members of what today would be described as the rural middle class. Many settlers were so poor that they paid for passage across the Atlantic by selling their freedom for a given number of years; poverty forced others to leave their native lands for the New World against their will. Such is a picture of the early European settlers.

In the above passage, "them" is pointing back to "early European settlers". "They" is an anaphora of "many settlers". "Others" substitutes "other settlers" or it is an ellipsis of "settlers". Conjunction "nevertheless" offers a directionality in which one can assume that the following text is different from the preceding one. "Such" is representing the whole passage. Thus, through all these so called "cohesive ties" the passage is a semantic unity characteristic of a text.

As for lexical devices, coherence is achieved through repetition of words or a chain of words. Now let's look at the following example:

> Glacier National Park in Montana shares boundaries with Canada, an American Indian reservation, and a national forest. Along the North Fork of the Flathead River, the park also borders about 17,000 acres of private lands that are currently used for ranching, timber, and agriculture. This land is an important part of the habitat and migratory routes for several endangered species that frequent the park. These private lands are essentially the only ones available for development in the region.

In this passage, "park" repeats itself three times. "Lands" and "regions" are near synonyms and at the same time they are superordinate of "park". "Reservation", "forest" and "park" are near synonyms. "Lands", "ranching", "timber" and "agriculture" are a group of words creating a situational environment or context. Through the lexical devices the selection is semantically connected and as a result is a coherent text.

The aforementioned grammatical and lexical ties all help achieve

coherence in a text and therefore contribute to comprehension. It is advisable that the subject make some discourse analysis by identifying those cohesive devices so as to establish association among sentences and obtain the whole message.

Sometimes, however, the information database stored in our long-term memory and the knowledge about cohesion are not enough for the subject to understand a message because some textual development is quite out of our expectancy patterns. With this we have to resort to situational context represented by field, tenor and mode. Sanford (1978) provides us with an illustration:

> John was on his way to school last Friday. He was really worried about the maths lesson. Last week he has been unable to control the class. It was unfair of the maths teacher to keep leaving him in charge. After all, it is not the normal part of the janitors duties.

The first two sentences may suggest that John is a school boy. But the third one sounds a bit strange as it goes against one's common sense or knowledge that a student couldn't be in charge of a class. Only through the fourth sentence onwards can the subject come to realize what John is. The reason for our misjudgment of John's position at the beginning is because that we are lack of the situational context. The three parametres including field (what is going on), tenor (who are taking part) and mode (role assigned to language, Hassan, July'1995) are not completely provided. This narration might be a selection from a story. The passage preceding it probably presents some information about John like what he does, what character he possesses and other descriptions as well. With all this information offered, the subject will have no problem understanding the above mentioned passage. Consequently context of situation is another element helpful to comprehension.

2. The Relationship between Comprehension and Memory

As we know, memory plays an important role in interpretation and is the basis for transference from the source language into the target language. Meanwhile, comprehension is a prerequisite for memory. One can not memorize an oral presentation without understanding it first.

There are different types of memory: episodic and semantic one. Episodic memory, described by McShane (1991) as memory for personal experience and their temporal relations or it is memory for a story with characters, setting as well as plots. Semantic memory is memory for facts, such as meaning of word and concepts, which is what we need in interpretation. In the course of consecutive interpretation, an interpreter's job is to remember all the facts concerning names, figures, dates, time, events and so on. Those data are crucial for retrieval later so they have to be precise.

And categorization as one of the mnemonic strategies can help the listener call up what has been heard. For instance, if one is exposed to a set of words like cat, shoe, dog, sunflower, hat, lily, sheep, gloves and peony, how could he easily memorize all of them? To recall the list it is easier to classify the words into three groups according to their superordinates, ie. animal, plant and clothes because they belong to these three categories. In this way the list of words can be easily stored in our memory. So it makes more sense for the learner to rearrange the input into a more familiar form in order to remember it. That explains why it is so important to make some analysis on discourse before storage.

Therefore, stimulus input has to be first processed, encoded and stored before it can be retrieved. Another mnemonic strategy is called inter-item associations proposed by Lange (1978). It is to relate logically analogous groups together so as to set up associations among different sentences. This kind of semantic sorting strategy is also helpful to memory. Consequently proper deployment of those strategies can not only contribute to comprehension but also to memory.

3. Note-taking as a Supplement to Memory

So far we have discussed how script and cohesion theory can help listening comprehension and how mnemonic strategies can function effectively for the sake of information storage. Now it is time for us to discuss how note taking can be complementary to memory due to our limited span of memory.

In the process of consecutive interpretation, the interpreter is expected to carry out his task between the chunks of language

utterances. Sometimes the speaker will dwell upon one point for longer than 20 minutes, so note taking becomes all the more an important assistance to memory.

Note-taking for interpretation is different from meeting minutes, lecture notes and short hand. Meeting minutes and lecture notes serve as a summary of main points raised in the meeting and short hand is not recommended for interpretation notes any more due to its necessity of double transcriptions that require longer time.

The widely applied method for note-taking for interpretation is key word method. By that is meant to take down only the words that carry essential information. Yates furnished us with the following example:

American Revolution lasted six long and difficult years.

The notes for that sentence would be better like this:

Am. Rev. 6 yrs

The missing bits which are comparatively minor points can be traced back through our short-term memory which lasts about 20 to 60 seconds. Remember the main purpose of note-taking is to provide clues for remembering and recalling and the listener has to go through "a meaningful thought process of organization, identification and evaluation before any meaningful notes can be taken down". Otherwise the randomly scripted notes can hardly make any sense at all.

There exist different thinking patterns. A speaker may organize his idea through deductive format, inductive format or a mixed one. With deductive organization he starts from thesis statement and then comes to support his ideas through illustrations, examples and experience. It is a method from general to specific and the listener should pay special attention to the thesis statement which is normally put in front of the passage. So far as the topic sentence is jotted down the rest of the part will be details centering around it and it is easier for the listener to get the idea stand out. The second pattern is from specific to general ie. the speaker gives a lot of facts, instances which will lead to the conclusion. Sometimes the speaker uses both thinking patterns. In this case the interpreter should be very sensitive to switch between different methods so as to get the

whole message correct. Once the subject is aware of the different thought patterns he will be prepared for taking notes.

Now, let's study some examples to see how note taking function as a supplement of memory and what role cohesion plays in note-taking.

> As the director of the Alumni Office, let me welcome you to this meeting and thank you for your interest in our internship program. While it may seem on to start planning now in September for your four week program next January, experiences show that such advance planning is essential. The purpose of this program is to give you undergraduates such a chance to investigate career opportunity through work experience. Such short term experience will be helpful in finding permanent employment after graduation. The program basically provides you with a full time job without pay or academic credit for the month of January when the college is closed. Opportunities are available in a wide range of fields including publishing, public administration, health care, and finance. The job is sponsored by alumni who are active in these fields. When you take one of these jobs, the sponsor will define your task and supervise your work. The function of the Alumni Office is to bring you and the sponsor together.

Apparently the above selection is a talk made by an Alumni official to a group of undergraduates. She is mainly talking about the internship program offered by the Alumni Office. The coherence of this passage is realized by lexical ties, ie. mainly repetition, synonym and near-synonym. They are indicated as follows:

Alumni Office....you (students)....program ....program..... program....you....experience....experience.....program..... opportunities....job....alumni.....jobs.....sponsor.....Alumni Office.

Actually there are three cohesive chains shown by Alumni Office, you, you, and internship program. Once the subject has gone through the process of sound recognition, build-up of word image, inter-item associations he has no problem understanding the passage. The next task is to decide what to jot down. Experiences show that it is unwise and impossible to write

everything down. The efficient way is to identify the key words that indicate essential information which sometimes contain cohesive ties themselves and include them in his notes. Now let's see how to transform the previous passage into notes:

Dir. A.O. welc meets
tak you interest prog.

adva. planning essntl

purpose: invst. career opp. th. exp.
↓
help emply aftr grad.

prog.: job w/o pay
acad. crdit

opp.: publishing
public admin.
health care
finance

job sponsd A. active --- fields
↓
define, superv.

functn A.O. bring 2 together

You may have noticed that a lot of abbreviations have been employed to make the notes easier and concise. Sometimes it is even more helpful to use symbols as well. The layout of the notes is equally important for it may help you to find the thread of the thought without much difficulty.

Similarly, from the following notes one can retrieve a piece of news.

Rabin
Perries ⊙ Arafat Oslo

began talks banq. presented Nobel P. Prize

↓

∴ efforts last yr's p. agree.

After cer. 3 leaders: { ME p. process
maint. momentum p.p.

1 hr talk Oslo Hot.

Disc: { Isr. forces further withdr.
elect. in Palest. ter.

x confir. ∴ 2 sides ✎ reveal details

Statement spokes: { meet θ spirit
2 sides reiter. implem.
p.p. next stage

We can retrieve the news according to the above notes as follows:

The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Israel Izak Rabin and Shemon Perries have been meeting the PLO leader Yasser Arafat late into the night in the Norwegian capital Oslo. The men began their talks at the end of a formal banquet on the day when they were jointly presented with Nobel peace prize for their efforts towards last year's peace agreement between Israeli and the PLO. After ceremonies the three leaders all called for the Middle East peace process to be speeded up.

After the splendor of formality of the prize giving ceremony the three key figures got down to business trying to maintain momentum in the peace process itself. For an hour and half they talk in the Oslo Hotel. The discussions are presumably centering on the related issues of when Israeli security forces will make further withdrawals from the west bank and when elections will be held in Palestinian territories. However there's no confirmation that these were the matters covered because both sides agree not to reveal any detail of their talks. The brief statement issued jointly by spokesmen said that only the meeting had been held in a friendly spirit and the both sides reiterated

a firm commitment to the full implementation of next stage of peace process.

At the beginning students find it hard to carry out two tasks at the same time since they cannot distribute their attention properly. With more and more practice however, they can succeed in taking eligible notes and some students even find their own way of doing this and set up their own system.

In conclusion, note-taking for consecutive interpretation is not an easy task. It requires the subject have solid knowledge of language and culture of a given country which facilitates his comprehension and it also requires that he possess certain kind of skills to cope with multi tasks through identification, categorization and evaluation in order to take effective notes. Doubtlessly script and cohesion theory both contribute to comprehension and memory in the cognitive process.

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